

NEWS RELEASE



***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney
Karen P. Hewitt***

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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - July 11, 2007

United States Attorney Karen P. Hewitt announced that Renato Bernaldo Paulin, the owner and operator of Benison Medical Supply, Inc., a San Diego medical equipment supplier, was sentenced today in federal court by United States District Judge Barry T. Moskowitz to serve 24 months in custody and three years of supervised release based on his previous entry of a guilty plea to the charge of conspiracy to defraud the Medicare health care program.

According to court records, between 1997 and 2003, Paulin was involved in a scheme to defraud Medicare through the submission of \$600,000 in false and fraudulent claims for payments relating to the purchase of medically unnecessary motorized wheelchairs and motorized wheelchair accessories. Paulin previously paid \$300,000 in restitution for the fraud through a civil settlement with the United States. As part of the civil settlement, Paulin further agreed to be permanently excluded from Medicare, Medicaid, and all other federal health care programs.

In connection with Paulin's guilty plea, he admitted that he conspired with Dr. Romulo Valdez, a San Diego physician, who signed false "Certificates of Medical Necessity," which Paulin then used to submit fraudulent claims to Medicare for unneeded motorized wheelchairs and motorized wheelchair accessories. Paulin also admitted making illegal payments to "recruiters" to refer patients to either Benison or Dr. Valdez so that Paulin could bill Medicare for medically unnecessary motorized wheelchairs and motorized wheelchair accessories.

United States Attorney Hewitt said, "This sentence in custody is appropriate given Paulin's criminal conduct. Paulin cheated Medicare and, by doing so, he cheated those law-abiding citizens in true need of the benefits of Medicare."

HHS-OIG Special Agent in Charge Gerald Roy said, "Protecting the Medicare program remains a national priority and the sentence imposed on Mr. Paulin today sends a clear message; those who defraud Medicare will be held accountable."

FBI Acting Special Agent in Charge Kathy D. Leodler commented, "Stealing from Medicare and other government programs will not go unpunished. This sentence should serve as a deterrent to those, like Mr. Paulin, who defraud our federal healthcare programs."

DEFENDANT

Case Number: 06CR0274-BTM

Renato Bernaldo Paulin

SUMMARY OF CHARGE

Conspiracy to Defraud the United States in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 371

AGENCIES

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General

Federal Bureau of Investigation

California Department of Justice, Bureau of Medical Fraud and Elder Abuse

California Department of Health Services, Medi-Cal Fraud Prevention Bureau